

## TUESDAY, 2ND OCTOBER, 1894.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

*Present*: Mr. Thompson (Chairman), Mr. Duncan, Mr. Green, Mr. Hall, Mr. Hogg, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. Mackintosh, Mr. Mills.

The minutes of the previous meeting on the 28th September were read and confirmed.

Mr. Scobie Mackenzie summed up the evidence and addressed the Committee, and Dr. Fitchett replied.

Further discussion and consideration of above subject postponed till the printed evidence is laid before the Committee.

The Committee then adjourned until Wednesday, the 3rd October, at 11 a.m.

## FRIDAY, 5TH OCTOBER, 1894.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

*Present*: Mr. Thompson (Chairman), Mr. Duncan, Mr. Hall, Mr. Hogg, Mr. Mackintosh.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 4th October were read and confirmed.

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Copies of the printed evidence given before the Committee in the above inquiry were distributed among the members.

Mr. Green moved, That a Sub-committee, consisting of the Chairman, Mr. Hogg, and the Hon. Sir R. Stout, be appointed to consider the evidence taken in the Pomahaka Estate Purchase Inquiry, and submit to the General Committee on Tuesday morning next, at 10.30 a.m., a draft report thereon.

Mr. Hogg moved, as an amendment, That the resolution moved by Mr. Green, appointing a Committee to prepare a report on the Pomahaka Inquiry, be considered on Tuesday next.

The Question being put, That the amendment be agreed to, the Committee divided, and the names were taken down as follow:—

*Ayes*, 2.—Mr. Hall, Mr. Hogg.

*Noes*, 1.—Mr. Green.

So the amendment was resolved in the affirmative.

The Committee then adjourned until Tuesday next, the 9th October, at 10.30 a.m.

## TUESDAY, 9TH OCTOBER, 1894.

The Committee met pursuant to notice.

*Present*: Mr. Thompson (Chairman), Mr. Duncan, Mr. Green, Mr. Hall, Mr. Hogg, Mr. T. Mackenzie, Mr. Mackintosh, Mr. Meredith, Mr. Mills. Hon. Sir R. Stout.

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 5th instant were read and confirmed.

The Committee then considered the printed evidence before them, with a view to reporting thereon.

*Resolved*, That the following draft report brought forward by the Hon. Sir R. Stout be printed, and submitted for final revision by the Committee on the following day:—

Your Committee was ordered to consider "the whole transactions in connection with the purchase of the Pomahaka Block under 'The Land for Settlements Act, 1892.'"

In pursuance of such order, your Committee has taken evidence, which is annexed to this report. At the inquiry Dr. Fitchett, from the Crown Law Office, appeared for the Minister of Lands and the Land Department. Mr. Scobie Mackenzie, at the invitation of the Committee, attended, examined witnesses, and afterwards addressed the Committee. The reason for the inquiry was given by Dr. Fitchett to be that certain statements had been made by Mr. Scobie Mackenzie, whilst a candidate for the Waihemo electorate, and that such statements were a reflection on the Minister of Lands. The statements referred to were as follows:—

"Let it be clearly understood I am far from suggesting corruption in connection with my opponent in this contest. I say again that I do not even include him among the political players. I think his intentions are excellent, and that he is doing the best he can for all classes of settlers. But a man with unlimited power is apt to be acted upon unconsciously in all sorts of ways. Take this last Pomahaka purchase, for instance. I believe it to be a downright bad purchase, a much worse one than Cheviot. I only know the land by repute, but it is a cold, ungenerous soil. It is purchased on the eve of a general election. The owner of it is an influential man in this immediate neighbourhood. He employs a number of men, and may influence a number of votes. His nephew is head of one branch of the Minister's department. The land has been for sale for many years. I heard it myself offered for sale at the same price, I think, ten years ago. It has been rented for a long time at 6d. per acre rent, which is 5 per cent. on a capital value of 10s. per acre. I believe, even at that rent, the land was about to be thrown up. Now, all these things may be mere isolated facts—there may be no connection between them at all. But a Minister's mind may be influenced unconsciously by the pressure of his friends, by the fear of his enemies, by fifty circumstances which have no direct connection with corruption, but which lead in that direction. I want you to remember this: It has never been the policy of the English law or custom to invest any individual with unchecked power over his neighbour."

The Pomahaka Estate is situate in Otago, lying south of the Pomahaka River, and some distance north of the Township of Clinton. It contains 7,462 acres, and was bought by Mr. John Douglas in 1869 or 1870, at 10s. per acre, at auction. Land could only be sold at that price in Otago after it had been open for sale for seven years at £1 per acre. Mr. Douglas never improved the land, and seems to have been anxious, since 1882, to find a purchaser for it. In 1889 he sold 1,140 acres of the estate at £3 12s. 6d. an acre on terms, the last payment of the